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Evaluation of social studies teachers' perceptions on project studies in terms of some variables

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate social studies teachers' perceptions on project studies in primary schools in terms of some variables (gender, graduated faculty, years in profession, and participation to in-service training). For this purpose, a questionnaire is prepared in order to elicit opinions of 25 social studies teachers from 22 primary schools of Ministry of National Education in the province of Kastamonu about their project studies on social studies lessons. Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.90. As a result of the survey conducted with teachers of social studies teachers, opinions of the teachers about the project studies being implemented in social studies classes do not show a statistically significant difference in terms of gender, years in profession, and participation to in-service training that they have received, but it was observed that the teachers who graduated from faculty of education have more positive views on the project studies than other social studies teachers.

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1. Introduction

Project-based learning approach is a learning approach that aims to solve problems by means of individual or small groups in a method similar to living under natural conditions. (Korkmaz and Kaptan, 2002). Project-based learning (PBL) is a model of regulating learning around projects (Thomas, 2000). Project-based learning is a method that allows students to throw out opinions about the topics covered in fields of interest, to ask questions, to estimate, to develop theories, to use different tools, to use the skills acquired in the context of a real and meaningful life and allows learner to solve problems and answer questions in a creative way in the classroom and outside. (Katz and Chard, 2000). Project-based learning highlights learning the concepts and principles rather than learning the facts on the desired content and highlights gaining complex problem solving skills rather than gaining skills separate from each other (Newell, 2003). According to Fogarty (1997), teaching of the project is built around the creation, application and the production of a thing. Project spans in an appropriate time. This period may be up to a period of a week, depending on the type of the project. For example, book reports, research publications, multi-media presentation and mechanical inventions are powerful regulators in creating a suitable curriculum suitable to interests, abilities, and resources. Project teaching supports learning based on hard work to produce something,

creativity, cooperation and experience. According to Terry (1997), project-based learning method is a mental and physical activity that students performed at or near the actual living conditions.

Items that are included in project-based learning approach are content, processes, activities and results. (Buck Institute for Education, PBL Overview, What is Project Based Learning?; Four Reasons to Try). According to Erdem and Akkoyunlu (2002), process steps in project-based learning: The identification of targets, determination and identification of the subject to be discussed or done, formation of teams, determination of the features of final report and presentation style, work schedule determination of control points, determination of the evaluation criteria and level of proficiency, collection and organization of the information, reporting, presentation of the project.

Teachers guide more and teach less in project-based learning (Carr and Jitendra, 2000). In project-based learning, students form groups or work individually to solve the problems. They decide themselves how they approach to problems, which activities they carry out and what resources they need to reach.

According to Hamurcu (2000), project-based learning method has a number of advantages. These are as follows: the vital skills, ability to use technology, cognitive skills, self-control skills, Attitudes, Trends, and Beliefs. Teachers may be shy to give students responsibility in project-based learning model. They think that students are not ready enough. Lack of instructional materials, exam pressure and family expectations can be other disadvantages (Aladağ, 2005).

This research is important because it reflects the perspectives of social studies teachers to project-based learning method, it shows the positive and negative aspects of the project work and it shows parent involvement in the studies.

The aim of this study is to evaluate social studies teachers' perceptions on project studies in primary schools in terms of some variables (gender, graduated faculty, years in profession, participation to in-service training). In this context answers were sought to these following questions.

1. What are the perceptions of social studies teachers on project studies in their schools?
2. Do the perceptions of social studies teachers on project studies show a meaningful difference in terms of teachers' gender?
3. Do the perceptions of social studies teachers on project studies show a meaningful difference in terms of teachers' graduated faculty?
4. Do the perceptions of social studies teachers on project studies show a meaningful difference in terms of teachers' years in profession?
5. Do the perceptions of social studies teachers on project studies show a meaningful difference in terms of teachers' participation to in-service training?

2. Methodology

This is a descriptive research in the survey model. The population of the study is 42 social studies teachers who work in primary schools in central province of Kastamonu. The study sample of this study was 22 social studies teachers in 22 primary schools.

2.1. Participants: The demographic features of the study sample were analyzed. The split between genders was in favor of female with 60% female and 40% male. The rate of teachers whose years in profession is between 1 to 5 years is 4%, whose tenure of office is between 6 to 10 years is 40%, whose tenure of office is between 11 and over is 56%. The rate of teachers whose years in current school is between 1 to 5 years is 68%, whose tenure of office is between 6 to 10 years is 12%, whose tenure of office is between 11 and over is 20%. When we analyze the participants in terms of previous work experience, 12% of them worked in private teaching institutions, 4% of them worked in colleges, 12% of them work in Ministry of Education as a paid teacher and 72% of the has no working experience. When we analyze the participants in terms of participation to in-service training seminars, 28% of the participated once, 24% of them participated twice, 44% of them participated, three times and 4% of them participated four times. When we analyze the participants in terms of their graduated school, 80% of participants graduated from faculty of education, 4% of them graduated from four year vocational education high school, 4% of

them graduated from four year vocational education high school and %12 of them graduated from faculty of science and literature.

2.2. *Data collection and data analysis:* As a data collection instrument, a questionnaire is used in order to elicit opinions of 25 social studies teachers from 22 primary schools about their project studies on social studies lessons. For the reliability of the instrument, literature study was done and pre-interview form was administered to ten social studies teacher in ten primary school of Ministry of Education and then a questionnaire is prepared. Expert opinion was examined for the validity of the questionnaire. Questionnaire was revised in line with the opinions of faculty members. Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.90.

In this study, quantitative data collection technique was used. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) program was used for statistical analysis of the data collected by the surveys filled in correctly and fully according to the explanations in the frame of the general aims of the study. The frequency, percentage, arithmetical mean and standard deviation of the answers were calculated. Independent t-Test, Kruskal-Wallis-H and Mann Withney-U test was used to analyze the data.

3. Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

Arithmetical mean and standard deviation of the answers that teachers give about their project studies were given in Table 1.

Table 1. Arithmetical mean and standard deviation of the answers that teachers give about their project studies

Item No	X	S	Item No	X	S
I1	3,440	1,044	I16	3,920	1,151
I2	3,560	1,083	I17	4,000	1,000
I3	2,960	1,059	I18	4,040	0,888
I4	4,240	0,969	I19	4,200	1,000
I5	4,200	1,154	I20	3,960	0,840
I6	3,400	1,040	I21	3,800	1,118
I7	2,920	1,077	I22	4,120	0,971
I8	3,880	0,832	I23	3,840	0,898
I9	2,320	1,029	I24	4,000	1,000
I10	2,120	1,092	I25	3,840	1,027
I11	2,240	1,011	I26	3,920	1,187
I12	3,000	1,080	I27	3,560	1,044
I13	3,680	1,144	I28	3,640	1,113
I14	3,160	0,898	I29	4,080	1,115
I15	3,400	1,000	I30	3,920	1,151
TOTAL	107,80	16,96			

When we analyze Table 1, it can be seen that the highest arithmetical mean of the items are I4 (4.24), I5 (4.20) and I19 (4.20), on the other hand, the lowest arithmetical mean of the items are I10 (2.12) and I11 (2.24). The total arithmetical mean of the scale in general is 107.80. According to these findings it can be seen that teachers answer generally in the level of “I agree”.

Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ gender were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ gender

Gender	N	Per Rank	Rank Total	MW-U	p
Male	15	12,50	187,50	67,500	0,677
Female	10	13,75	137,50		

*p>0.05

When we analyze Table 2, it can be seen that teachers’ opinions about their project studies do not show a meaningful difference according to gender [U = 67,50, p>0,05]. The findings are similar with the research done by Karamustafaoğlu (2006) which aims to determine science and technology teachers’ levels of using instructional materials.

Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ school type they graduated were given in Table 3.

Table 3. Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ school type they graduated

School Type	N	Per Rank	Rank Total	MW-U	p
Faculty of Education	20	14,53	290,50	19,50	0,038
Other (Faculty of science and literature, two year vocational education high school, etc)	5	6,90	34,50		

*p<0.05

When we analyze Table 2, it can be seen that teachers’ opinions about their project studies show a meaningful difference according to teachers’ school type they graduated [U=19.50, p<0,05]. This finding can be interpreted like that teachers who graduated from faculty of education have a more positive opinion than other teachers who graduated from other faculties and vocational education high schools. This situation may be due to the fact that teachers who graduated from Faculty of Education took courses of educational sciences (Introduction to Education, Teaching Principles and Methods, etc.) during their training.

Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ years in profession were given in Table 4.

Table 4. Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ years in profession

Years in profession	N	Per Rank	Rank Total	MW-U	p
1-10 years	11	16,05	176,50	43,50	0,066
11 year and over	14	10,61	148,50		

*p>0.05

As it can be seen in Table 4, there is not a meaningful difference between teachers whose years of profession is 1-10 years and teachers whose years of profession is 11 year and over [U = 43,50, p>0,05]. The findings are similar with the research done by Şahin (2007) which is called “Teacher and student opinions on application of project-based learning method in elementary science and technology course”. In this research, teacher opinions on application of project-based learning method don’t change according to teachers’ years in profession.

Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ participation to in-service training were given in Table 5.

Table 5. Mann Whitney-U Test results according to teachers’ participation to in-service training

In-service training	N	Per Rank	Rank Total	MW-U	p
None or once	7	11,21	78,50	50,50	0,448
Twice and more	18	13,69	246,50		

*p>0.05

When we analyze Table 2, it can be seen that teachers’ opinions about their project studies do not show a meaningful difference according to teachers’ participation to in-service training [U = 50.50, p>0,05]. This finding can be interpreted like that teachers have similar opinions about their project studies according to teachers’ participation to in-service training. The findings aren’t similar with the research done Önenet al. (2010). In this research, teachers’ opinions about their project studies change significantly in a positive way.

As a conclusion it can be seen that teachers’ answers about their project studies being implemented in schools in the level of “I agree”. Opinions of the teachers about the project studies being implemented in social studies classes do not show a statistically significant difference in terms of gender, years in profession, and participation to in-service training that they have received, on the other hand, teachers’ opinions about their project studies show a meaningful difference according to teachers’ school type they graduated. It was observed that the teachers who graduated from faculty of education have more positive views on the project studies than other social studies teachers.

According to the results of the study, the following recommendations can be made: the teachers provide the necessary information to students about the purpose of construction of the project before doing the project work. Teachers also should provide the necessary information about the cost of the project before students start working on the project. Social studies teaching hours should be increased in order to implement an project-based learning

method effectively. Teachers should inform the family of the students about their responsibilities during the project work.

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